

# Kentucky Literacy Link

A Publication of the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE)

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## Editor's Note

When I initially sent this newsletter on through the review process here at KDE, I did not know that it would be my last as editor. However, it is with a joyful but heavy heart that I must tell you that this is indeed the case. I am moving on to an amazing job back in my home county (about which I am beyond excited), meaning that my time with KDE has now drawn to a close. Without a doubt, editing this publication has been my favorite part of my job. Thank you for listening to my ramblings and sharing your great work with me. Thank you for what you do for kids every day. Thank you for helping me to grow.

See You Later,  
MK

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## Letter from the Editor: What Are You Reading?

Mikkaka "MK" Overstreet is a KDE literacy consultant and the editor of this publication. Contact her [here](#).

Until I began my Ph.D. program, I had no idea how precious leisure reading was to me. Now, with so little time to read anything that isn't peer-reviewed, I realize what I've lost. Consequently, I found the International Literacy Association's new position statement on leisure reading very appealing. ([See page 3](#) for more.)

My long drives around the state are now pleasurable thanks to the public library's wide selection of audiobooks. They've helped me make time to sigh over Captain Wentworth's letter in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* and to eagerly devour the latest dystopian adventures like Rick Yancey's *The Infinite*

Sea. Finally, there's time to read!

Time is a teacher's most precious commodity and, with all the demands on it, making time for leisure reading for students must be difficult. However, it is essential that we do so. We need our students to read things that they love, that they can't put down, that make them think and wonder! We need them not to read with the purpose of finding the answer to questions on a worksheet, or so that they can take an AR test, but because avid readers do better in school, are better problem solvers, have better interpersonal skills and so much more!

Now certainly there is a time to read for the purposes above, but we must maintain a balance. Are we offering students a variety of

materials for their consumption? Are there books on a variety of topics, at multiple levels, including multiple genres and representing varied cultures? The kid that hates reading simply hasn't found the right book. How are you going to help her find it?

Many teachers lament a lack of financial resources as a barrier to building a strong classroom library. Remember that your school library media specialist and the public librarians are your friends! I know that the Louisville Free Public Library allows patrons to check out 99 items at a time! PLUS you can request books be sent to the branch nearest you and they will be held for you until pick-up. Please take time today to think about how you can make time for leisure reading in your classroom!

## Kentucky Department of Education Updates

### TELL Survey Coming in March

The third statewide administration of the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Kentucky survey will be held from March 2 through March 31. This anonymous, Web-based survey is an opportunity for all certified, school-based educators (including principals) to share their perceptions of the teaching and learning conditions in Kentucky schools. Information packets will be sent to all schools and Area Technology Centers in mid- to late February. The packets will contain letters with unique access codes that allow each educator to log into the survey at their convenience. As in previous years, weekly drawings will be held for cash prizes, donated by the TELL Coalition of Partners to encourage survey

participation. For more information about the survey, contact [Christine Boatwright](#) or visit the [TELL Kentucky website](#).

### Kentucky Graduation Rate Among Top in the Nation

The latest numbers on the graduation rate are out from the United States Department of Education, and Kentucky is among the leaders nationwide. According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), Kentucky's 86 percent graduation rate in the 2012-13 school year is fourth highest in the United States. Only nine states have a higher rate and six are tied with Kentucky. The national graduation rate is 81 percent.

Kentucky's most recent data from the 2013-14 school year shows

even more improvement with a graduation rate of 87.5 percent, so it's expected that when the new national data comes out next year, Kentucky will once again be among the leaders, Commissioner Holliday said.

This is the first time in the past few years that Kentucky has been included in the national graduation rate data release after the state adopted a new, more accurate 4-year cohort graduation rate calculation – the same as what most other states use.

The latest Kentucky public school data can be found online in the [Kentucky School Report Card](#) and the [Open House](#) public school data and information portal.



## Spotlight: Poetry Out Loud celebrates 10 years in Kentucky

The [Kentucky Arts Council](#), the state arts agency, fosters environments for Kentuckians to value, participate in and benefit from the arts. Kentucky Arts Council funding is provided by the Kentucky General Assembly and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Poetry Out Loud, a poetry recitation contest sponsored by the Kentucky Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, celebrates its 10th year in Kentucky Schools in 2015.

The contest starts at the classroom level. Winners advance to schoolwide competition, then to the state competition, Feb. 19 at the Grand Theatre in Frankfort. Fifteen Kentucky schools, including three that are new to the program, will compete for the chance to represent Kentucky at the national finals April 28-29 in Washington, D.C. Storytellers, poets and stage performers from across the state will be visiting each of the participating schools to mentor students on how to improve their recitations.

"Poetry Out Loud continues to build in popularity each year, and we hope to continue the momentum we've built for it here

in Kentucky," said Lori Meadows, arts council executive director. "We also hope to add to the number of professional mentors helping students prepare their pieces. This process gives the added benefit of exposing students to professionals in the creative industry."

Susan Ryan, the Gifted and Talented Program coordinator for Elizabethtown Independent Schools, said Poetry Out Loud helps students find their creative voice, especially among students who never thought they could perform.

"Anytime we give students a creative product, they go crazy with it," Ryan said. "Teachers are going to see some kid come to life in Poetry Out Loud who, on any other day of the week, would not be inclined to speak up in class."

Participating schools are:

- Boyd County High School, Ashland
- Grant County High School, Dry Ridge
- Elizabethtown High School, Elizabethtown \*
- Western Hills High School, Frankfort
- Franklin County High School, Frankfort

- West Carter High School, Grayson \*
- East Ridge High School, Lick Creek
- Butler Traditional High School, Louisville
- Graves County High School, Mayfield \*
- Hart County High School, Munfordville
- McCracken County High School, Paducah
- Phelps Junior and Senior High Schools, Phelps
- Pike County Central High School, Pikeville
- Allen County-Scottsville High School, Scottsville
- George Rogers Clark High School, Winchester

(\*denotes a school new to the Poetry Out Loud program in 2015)

The winner of the state finals receives \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip with an adult chaperone to Washington, to compete for the national championship. The state winner's school receives a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. The first runner-up receives \$100, with \$200 going to his or her school library.

## Rural Schools Professional Development Initiative Writing PD Grant

In conjunction with the Kentucky Department of Education, the Kentucky Writing Project (KWP) is pleased to invite you to apply for a Professional Development Mini-Grant. Priority will be given to schools and districts which meet these criteria:

- Writing Achievement is a major goal (CSIP)
- Rural High Needs
- Demonstration of faculty buy-in (signature sheet provided), with teachers agreeing to focus on opinion/argument writing as a student growth goal in 2015-16
- Willing to partner with other schools, within the district or outside the district
- Administrator attendance at all sessions

This initiative focuses on opinion/argument writing, K-12, especially for teachers of English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. Schools, districts, and consortia of

districts are invited to apply for a grant that will provide the following:

- Three consecutive days (18 hours) of Professional Development, scheduled between late May and June 30, 2015, by Kentucky Writing Project Teacher Consultants, personalized to school needs and driven by analysis of student work
- Hands-on PD in which teachers learn to teach opinion/argument by participating in the lessons they will share with their students in Fall 2015
- Nationally tested lesson sequences and materials designed to lift the quality of student opinion/argument writing
- Sessions by knowledgeable WP Teacher Consultants
- Support for teachers in creating Student Growth Goals
- Follow-up support in the fall for lead teachers, who will then share strategies and materials with their colleagues

- Virtual follow-up support for interested teachers
- Free registration for the Kentucky Writing Project Fall Conference in Lexington, September 12, 2015

In-kind contributions required of successful schools and districts:

- Photocopies of PD materials
- Refreshments during PD sessions
- Stipends (if required by contract) for teachers
- Travel support/stipend for Lead Teachers to attend the KWP Fall Conference (Sat., Sept. 12 in Lexington) and travel support/release time for two additional meetings in Fall 2015

A PowerPoint is [attached](#) that you may wish to share in a faculty meeting in order to consider whether this opportunity is a good match for your school/district. [Applications](#) are due March 15.

## Kentucky Educational Television Young Writers Contest

Ignite your students' imaginations through creative writing! The KET Young Writers Contest is a great opportunity for students to write for an authentic audience. Each story that meets contest guidelines will be read by a panel of judges and each child that enters will receive an official certificate after the winners have been selected.

KET now offers two separate contests. Due to the overwhelming popularity of their 2014 Short Story Contest, they decided to continue the contest for 4th and 5th graders

this year. They will also have the illustrated story contest for children in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Both of these contests begin on January 15th and end on April 11th. Please note that illustrated stories must be mailed or hand delivered to KET, while short stories must be typed and submitted online. Short story entry forms are to be mailed or hand delivered separately.

Be sure to read the complete rules for the contest(s) before you get started because there have been a number of changes. Previ-

ous winners, contest rules, entry forms and rubrics for both contests are available [here](http://www.ket.org/writerscontest).

Please contact [writerscontest@ket.org](mailto:writerscontest@ket.org) if you have any questions about entering the contest.



## 2015 Outstanding Civic Education Leadership Award

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2015 Outstanding Civic Education Leadership Award. You can find more information and the download for the nomination packet [here](http://www.ket.org/civiled).

The award winner will receive a \$1,000 cash prize to be used to further his or her civic learning initiatives or program. One final-

ist will be selected from each Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA) region, and the winner and each finalist will receive a plaque and be recognized during the KHSAA



Boy's Sweet 16 Basketball Tournament in Lexington.

The Office of Secretary of State is proud to partner with the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Kentucky Department of Education as the award's sponsors.

Please consider nominating yourself or another worthy candidate for the award as well as circulate the award information to colleagues for their consideration.

Please contact Bradford Queen, [bradford.queen@ky.gov](mailto:bradford.queen@ky.gov), at the Secretary of State's office if you have any questions.

## New International Reading Association Position Statement

As an advocate of excellence in teaching, the International Reading Association (IRA) participates actively in shaping sound public policy in education. In May 2014 the IRA Board of Directors approved two new position statements; "Using High-Stakes Assessments for Grade Retention and Graduation Decisions" and "Leisure Reading".

The position statement on leisure reading, co-published with the Canadian Children's Book Centre and the National Council of Teachers of English, is of particular interest to practicing teachers. According to the summary on IRA's [website](http://www.ira.org):

Students' reading comprehension, vocabulary, general knowledge, motivation to read throughout their lives, and positive attitudes toward reading are enhanced when they have regular opportunities to choose reading materials for leisure reading. The International Reading Association, the Canadian Children's Book Centre, and the National Council of Teachers of English offer this position statement as a guide to support teachers and families in providing daily op-

portunities for children's and young adults' leisure reading. This position statement is important at a time when the results of international surveys indicate a decline in students' positive attitudes toward reading and when an emphasis on high-stakes literacy tests works against providing time for leisure reading in classrooms.

The position statement's recommendations are based on these principles:

1. Students should choose their own reading materials.
2. Students are better able to choose engaging and appropriate reading materials when teachers and family members scaffold their selections.
3. The benefits of leisure reading are increased when teachers scaffold school-based leisure reading by incorporating reflection, response, and sharing in a wide range of ways that are not evaluated.
4. Students should be encouraged to engage in self-selected reading outside of school.

You can access the Leisure Reading position statement in its entirety [here](http://www.ira.org).

The assessment position statement maintains:

1. Grade retention and graduation decisions should be based on multiple assessments, including teacher professional judgment, results of formative assessments, and student and family input, as well as results from standardized literacy assessments.
2. Schools, school districts, and policymakers should be guided by the expertise of professional associations and literacy professionals when making decisions about how to best utilize results obtained from high-stakes literacy assessments.
3. Professional development should be available for teachers on assessment strategies for obtaining a complete picture of a student's literacy performance.

You may access the position statement on high-stakes assessment [here](http://www.ira.org).

Upcoming  
Events!

## Upcoming Literacy Events Around Kentucky

### 2015 KCTE Conference

The 2015 Kentucky Council of Teachers of English Conference will be held in Lexington on Feb. 27-28. The theme is "Balancing Passion and Practice: Kentucky Teachers Leading the Way." Now more than ever we are asked to evolve, to repurpose our practice to address new standards. We are asked to adapt to new evaluation systems and assessment measures. How do we adapt yet still follow the drive of our passion for learning? How do we build a culture of learning that balances passion and best practice? Join us as we learn how Kentucky teachers are leading the way in education! Click [here](#) to view the featured speaker flyer.

### 2015 Let's TALK Conference

The 2015 Let's TALK Conference to be held June 15-16, 2015 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Louisville. Visit the conference link to [download the flyer](#). Registration is \$50 for practicing and \$25 for pre-service teachers. Session strands include the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System, standards implementation, closing achievement gaps, teacher leadership, and National Board Certification.

### Kentucky History Education Conference

A call for proposals is currently being made for educator presentations at the annual Kentucky History Education Conference, which will be held on Thursday, July 9, 2015, at the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History in Frankfort. This year's conference will be based around the 2015-2016 National History Day theme; Exploration, Encounter and Exchange in History. Any educators that may have innovative classroom practices (especially involving primary sources) are encouraged to submit a proposal to present and share their ideas. If you feel you have a lesson or activity that would benefit other history teachers and would like to participate, please email a short abstract (up to 200 words) and your resume to [Tim Talbott](#) by April 10, 2015. Those selected will be notified by May 1, 2015. Accepted presenters will have their conference registration fee waived and lunch provided. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Tim Talbott via [email](#) or at 502-564-1792, ext. 4428.

### #KySTE15 Open for Registration

"Welcome to the Future!" KySTE 2015, the conference of the Kentucky Society for

Technology in Education, [invites you to attend](#). March 4-6, join information technology leaders, technicians, tech re-integration specialists, classroom teachers, administrators/district leaders, library media specialists, vendors/exhibitors, and other education professionals at the Galt House Hotel for the largest education technology conference in the south central US. Concurrent Session Matrix now available in [Excel/xlsx](#) and [PDF](#) formats. Early Bird pricing ends February 16th!

### #PGES4Me-Save the date!

The #PGES4Me simulcast will be held July 28. This year's simulcast will include a more in-depth look at PGES content knowledge and offer refinement and strategies for successful implementation of the components of PGES. Districts and schools: please be on the lookout for more information about participation options.

### 2015 African American Read-In with NCTE

The National Council of Teachers of English urges schools, churches, libraries, bookstores, community and professional organizations, and interested citizens to make literacy a significant part of Black History Month by hosting and coordinating Read-Ins in their communities. [Hosting a Read-In](#) can be as simple as bringing together family and friends to share a book, or as elaborate as arranging public readings and media presentations that feature professional African American writers.

After your event has culminated, NCTE asks you to [submit a short host report](#) that asks for the number of attendees, hosting individual or group, and works read. [The Host Report Cards](#) are used to compute the total number of readers, nationwide, each year. In addition, your name and/or organization is added to the national database which gives tangible evidence, including a certificate of participation, of your role in making literacy a significant part of Black History Month. To be an official participant, you must submit a host report card after the event and no later than March 15th. NCTE is creating a tradition, and they want you to be a part of it. Visit [NCTE's website](#) to download host materials and to view other resources that will assist you as you plan and implement your African American Read-In.

### Capture the Earth Photography Contest

The Kentucky Energy and Environment Cab-

inet has kicked off its fifth-annual "Capture the Earth" middle school digital photography contest for all Kentucky students in grades 6-8. Judges will look for originality and creativity, photo composition, and a brief explanation of how well the photograph celebrates the beauty and diversity of Kentucky and encourages others to care about the state's environment through stewardship and conservation. Whether the photo is a native wildflower or wildlife, a landscape or waterscape, encourage your students to share their photography skills through the contest and help create a greater interest in the outdoors.

Entries will be accepted until 4:30 p.m. on Friday, April 3, 2015. The winner will receive a night's lodging at any Kentucky State Resort Park with his or her family. Middle school students may e-mail one photograph as an attachment to [Kidsphotocontest@ky.gov](#). It doesn't matter when the photo was taken as long as the student is the photographer and the photograph was taken in Kentucky. Official contest rules are available [here](#). Please feel free to share the attached [flyer](#). If you have questions, email [Ricki.gardenhire@ky.gov](#).

### Kentucky Association for Environmental Education 39th Annual Conference

KAEE is moving "Full STEAM Ahead"! Join them at Jenny Wiley State Resort Park September 10-12, 2015. You are invited to submit a proposal for a Concurrent Session that is reflective of at least one of the following four strands: (1) Science, Engineering, and Math; (2) Food Systems; (3) The Arts; and (4) Skills and Competencies for Organizations. Proposals are due by close of business on April 17, 2015, and should be submitted through the online "Call for Proposals" Form on the [KAEE website](#).

The conference provides fun for you AND your whole family!

- Dinner and Live Auction at the Mountain Arts Center
  - Elk Tours
  - Live Music from Local Musicians
  - Offsite Tours
  - Workshops
  - Family Activities
  - Mystery Table
  - Over 30 Great Sessions and more!
- Registration Opens July 15, 2015!



# Help

Your contributions of ideas and lessons that work are welcome. E-mail [mikkaka.overstreet@education.ky.gov](mailto:mikkaka.overstreet@education.ky.gov) to submit. Your submissions may be included in the Literacy Link to help connect teachers across the state by sharing ideas, insights and best practices.

Access this and past Literacy Links on KDE's website:  
[Click Here](#)



## If you have questions or concerns, we want to help. Contact:

- Rebecca Atkins-Stumbo – Literacy/Early Childhood Consultant – [rebecca.atkins-stumbo@education.ky.gov](mailto:rebecca.atkins-stumbo@education.ky.gov)
- Kelly Clark – Literacy Consultant – [kelly.clark@education.ky.gov](mailto:kelly.clark@education.ky.gov)
- Robin Hebert – Literacy Coordinator – [robin.hebert@education.ky.gov](mailto:robin.hebert@education.ky.gov)
- Kathy Mansfield – Library Media/Textbooks Consultant – [kathy.mansfield@education.ky.gov](mailto:kathy.mansfield@education.ky.gov)
- MK Overstreet – Literacy Consultant – [mikkaka.overstreet@education.ky.gov](mailto:mikkaka.overstreet@education.ky.gov)
- Teresa Rogers – Literacy Consultant – [teresa.rogers@education.ky.gov](mailto:teresa.rogers@education.ky.gov)
- Pamela Wininger – Literacy Consultant – [pamela.wininger@education.ky.gov](mailto:pamela.wininger@education.ky.gov)



## Feedback from the Field



*Your feedback helps us to tailor the Link to best meet the needs of teachers. We want to hear from you! E-mail MK Overstreet.*

"As always, I enjoyed reading the

latest issue of the Literacy Link. I find such good information and resources, and it helps me keep in touch with what's happening throughout the state. I especially loved the two poems at the beginning of the newsletter. Even for those of us who are not working

on a dissertation (and I know that's daunting!), they were very inspirational. Especially at this time of year, we all need something to keep us going! And Rumi and Dickinson are two of my favorites."

–Cary

## Additional Reading and Other Resources

- Register to receive access to the electronic edition of USA TODAY at NO COST for your classroom, courtesy of the USA TODAY Charitable Foundation and/or one of their generous partners in education. They are now accepting requests for grants that will begin in **Jan. 20, 2015** and run through the spring semester. The e-Edition is the exact digital replica of the print edition of the newspaper and is available 5 days per week. Educators (elementary, middle and high school) may register [here](#) to receive complimentary access to the e-Edition for use (for you and your students) in the classroom.
- KET's [Visual Arts Toolkit video](#) is now available on [PBS LearningMedia](#). It includes the video with a background essay, discussion questions, and a few activities.
- [Inspiring Middle School Literacy](#) lessons (40 total categorized by various content areas) are available in PBS LearningMedia. Students will need accounts. For more information, see [here](#).
- PBS is once again looking for America's most innovative educators! Apply today to become a **2015 PBS LearningMedia Digital Innovator** and you could receive one year of FREE professional development, access to exclusive resources, and a trip to Philly! [Submit your video application today!](#)
- Do you want to see students excited about history? Do you want to help them develop as learners? National History Day Kentucky (NHDKy) is looking for judges for our district and state contests. Every year, NHDKy serves nearly 3,000 students with this program. Students choose between exhibits, papers, websites, documentaries, and performances on a historical topic related to the overall NHD theme, which is Leadership and Legacy for 2015. With eight regional contests throughout the state, and the state competition held at the University of Kentucky this year, NHDKy needs both experienced and new judges for the competi-
- tions. Please see the [attached document](#) for more information, and check out the [website](#).
- KET is part of public media's American Graduate Initiative, spotlighting and supporting community-based solutions that address the dropout crisis and improve education from early childhood to career. Visit the [American Graduate](#) website to watch [Dropping Back In](#), learn more, and get involved!
- [Kentucky Teacher](#), the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE's) award-winning online publication, is the place to go to stay abreast of what is happening in Kentucky's public schools. [Kentucky Teacher](#) includes education news, feature articles that highlight successful classroom practice, helpful resources and more.
- The January PGES Newsletter is now Available-Click [here](#) to access the Point of Contact/Superintendent/Principal Edition and [here](#) to access the Teacher Edition.

